

Coquelin Run Citizens Association

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Via U.S. Mail and E-mail

Mr. Ike Leggett
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Mr. Roger Berliner
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Improvements to Jones Bridge Road

Dear Mr. Leggett and Mr. Berliner:

On behalf of the Coquelin Run Citizens Association, I want to extend our gratitude for the traffic-calming and pedestrian-safety improvements recently implemented on the segment of Jones Bridge Road that runs through our community, between Jones Mill Road and Connecticut Avenue.

As you'll recall, Jones Bridge Road was altered several years ago to include a center turn lane. Over the years, this center turn lane became known throughout the community as the "suicide lane," due to the unsafe (and illegal) manner in which it was being used. In particular, impatient drivers would use it as a passing lane to "jump the queue" and, even worse, to pass stopped school buses. These illegal maneuvers resulted in many accidents and far too many near-misses to count. Moreover, the great increase in traffic volume on Jones Bridge Road has made it an absolute nightmare for pedestrians, especially for school children and parents with small children.

The recent improvements include raised pedestrian islands, concrete islands to prevent using the center turn lane as a passing lane, and bump-outs (with cut-throughs for cyclists). I am very happy to report that these measures greatly curtail the unsafe use of the center turn lane, slow down traffic a bit, and have made Jones Bridge Road much safer for pedestrians. The cross-walks are especially important for the school children

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crossing the street to the school and the bus stops, as well as the families with young children who must cross the street to access community amenities such as the neighborhood pool and nearby nature preserve.

Undoubtedly, the old adage “you can’t please everyone” (with which I’m sure you are all too familiar) will ring true here. While the reaction to the improvements has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the community, I’m sure you will hear some grumblings that the cross-walks and the concrete medians seem to cause traffic to back up a bit in certain places. However, this criticism is misplaced. To the extent traffic used to flow better, that was only because there were no measures in place to keep motorists from flaunting the law and using the center turn lane in an illegal and unsafe manner. The fact that drivers may be inconvenienced by measures that prevent them from engaging in illegal and unsafe maneuvers is hardly a legitimate complaint. Furthermore, the underlying rationale of such criticism is nothing short of appalling. If some people wind up sitting in traffic for a few extra minutes in exchange for less accidents and a lesser chance that one of our children will get killed walking to the pool or to school, then so be it. Anyone who is upset about being slightly inconvenienced by measures that enhance the safety of others clearly does not have their priorities straight. Indeed, this attitude among motorists, who treated Jones Bridge Road as an expressway instead of a residential street, is precisely why such measures were so necessary.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express how grateful we are to Councilmember Berliner, who was of great help to our community by coordinating a meeting last summer between several community members and representatives from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (“MCDOT”), including Fred Lees and Seifu Kerse. At this meeting, we had the opportunity to express our concerns about Jones Bridge Road and begin a dialogue with MCDOT regarding how to address the situation. Mr. Berliner’s assistance at and following this meeting undoubtedly helped bring about these much needed improvements in a timely manner. Furthermore, I want to share with you what a pleasure it was to deal with Mr. Lees and Ms. Kerse. They were at all times very friendly, professional, and patient in their many dealings with us over the past several months. They were nothing short of model County employees. While at times we became frustrated with the amount of time it took for the improvements to be implemented, we now better appreciate how time consuming it is to conduct the necessary studies, draft the plans, secure funding, and perform the actual construction. Considering how many projects there must be in the queue, I’m sure the implementation of these improvements so early in the construction season was no easy feat, and we very much appreciate it.

In sum, these improvements are a welcome addition to our community, and may even save a life. We look forward to working with the County on other important issues facing our community.

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Sincerely,

/s/ Phil MacWilliams

Phil MacWilliams

cc: Arthur Holmes, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (via U.S. mail and email)